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ABSTRACT

In Japanese colleges and universities, native speaker teachers in English departments are sometimes called on to teach courses that furnish English majors with the necessary tools to write their graduation theses in English. This study was undertaken at one university to determine what constitutes a graduation thesis, what aspects of the thesis are deemed important, criteria used to assess the quality of both the process and the product, what that process is, the meaning and importance of originality and research in such a thesis, the meaning of plagiarism and how it is treated, who can give help to the student, and what students see as helpful in thesis preparation. The results provide an analysis of student needs that may be useful to native English-speaking teachers in developing a thesis course syllabus. The report outlines the methodology used in developing needs assessment questionnaires, conducting and revising them, and surveying 29 teachers and 6 students. Results are summarized. Data summaries and questionnaires are appended. (Contains 12 references.) (MSE)

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ED 419 413

Defining the Graduation Thesis & Identifying Student Needs (1)

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Native speaker teachers in departments of English are sometimes called upon to teach courses which are to furnish English majors with the tools necessary for them to write their graduation theses in English. As most often those teachers have not grown up within the Japanese education system and are, therefore, not endowed with the cultural background that would help them intuit what would be expedient in a syllabus for such a course, developing a syllabus can be a daunting task. In addition, quite a few English departments do not have a uniform set of standards or set of guidelines for the students, let alone for the teacher. It is therefore up to the individual teacher's ingenuity, knowledge and experience to formulate a syllabus for such a course.

The first step would naturally be to determine the needs of the students in writing such a thesis (Reid 78). Although doing a simple needs analysis (2) is not a difficult task, some cultural factors embedded within many Japanese universities can handicap the researcher who might be perceived of as "snooping" into what her colleagues are doing in their classrooms. "Snooping" does not carry a positive connotation in any culture, but the boundaries of what is defined as "snooping" are drawn up differently in different cultures. In some of the older, more traditional universities in Japan, the teachers do not discuss what they do in the classroom. Each classroom is an island, and any attempt to determine what a teacher requires of his or her students can be perceived of as "snooping." This can make doing a needs analysis somewhat dicey for a new foreign teacher in a department where he or she may already be in the spotlight. In such cases, a needs analysis may have to be put off for several years until the new teacher has established an environment of trust with his or her colleagues.

The department in which this research was carried out is a Department of English consisting of British Literature, American Literature, Linguistics and Philology making it a department of many disciplines and therefore of many needs in terms of its graduation theses. One of the purposes for hiring a native speaker teacher was to make it possible to offer a class for third year students to improve the writing in their graduation theses. The only existing writing courses at that time were two basic composition courses taught by

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two of the younger teachers in the department, and they were not required for departmental majors. As the department takes pride in the fact that the students have full responsibility for determining their own education as English majors, there were, and still are, few required courses, and the new course was highly recommended, but not required. Although this is still the case, approximately 95% of the majors take the course, or at least begin it, and about 80% of those finish it.(3)

As there has never been a uniform set of standards or set of guidelines except that the thesis is to be about thirty pages in length and written in English, the advisors have always each been on their own to guide their students. In many cases, the students are given example theses to read and / or a style sheet to help them with format in addition to what the advisor tells them. Traditionally, part of the assignment for the students has been to determine not only what to write, but also how to write it, on their own and through discussion with their advisor. By carefully examining previous theses, they can determine the how; through discussion with their advisors, they can determine the what. Learning on your own has been a traditional part of being a student in the department. However, several years ago, this was determined to be insufficient for today's students, and it was decided that the quality of the theses needed improvement. Today, within the department, there is a tension between wanting the student to work and figure out things on his or her own with the guidance of the advisor, and the flip side in which the students are given step by step guidance as a group during their senior year. Individual teachers stand along a continuum of opinion.(4)

Against such a background, the syllabus for the third year writing course has until now attempted to provide students with a rather basic and general familiarity with academic writing. Indeed, for a course which must begin with the paragraph, this may be all that can be accomplished.(5) However, with more informed teaching as the goal, the teacher determined to do a needs analysis at the earliest possible time. This paper will describe the research carried out in order to determine at this university what constitutes a graduation thesis, what aspects of a thesis are deemed to be important, what criteria are used in determining the quality of both the process and the product, what that process is, the meaning and importance of originality and research in such a thesis, the meaning of plagiarism and what is done about it, who can give help to the student, and finally what students themselves deemed as helpful to them in preparing their theses. The results provide an analysis of students' needs which will be useful in revising or creating a new syllabus.(6)

Methodology

Since each advisor is pretty much the only source of advice and instruction as well as being the source of evaluation of the students' work,(7) it was necessary to tap into the concepts and processes of as many of the teachers as possible in order to determine an overall average for the department as well as for each of the four sub-departments (British Literature, American Literature, Linguistics and Philology).(8) The two survey methods of information gathering were considered: the questionnaire and the interview. For reasons of practicality, the questionnaire was chosen as the primary means of data collection.(9) Following calculation of the first questionnaire in Fall of 1995 (see Appendix B), a second questionnaire was administered in Fall, 1996 (see Appendix C) to clear up gray areas in the data, and some interviews were conducted with specific teacher / advisors to get more detail than could be acquired in the questionnaires.

The objectives of the study were to discover the purpose of the graduation thesis, the meaning and importance of originality in a thesis,(10) the weight of importance of certain aspects of a thesis, the meaning and importance of research in a thesis, the process through which students are advised to proceed, some of the factors involved in the evaluation of a thesis, and finally how students themselves evaluate the usefulness of the writing course. To these ends, questions were formulated for each section of each of the questionnaires.

It is generally agreed that one of the most difficult aspects of writing a questionnaire is in formulating the questions themselves (see Bailey 1982, Cohen & Manion 1990, Nunan 1995, Smith 1988, and Walker (1985)). Nunan (p. 143) indicates that "a danger with any type of elicitation device is that the responses one gets will be the artifacts of the elicitation devices themselves." Smith (p. 227) states that "questions should be clear and unambiguous. . .simple and brief. . .not double-barreled. . .as non threatening as possible." Special care was taken in formulating the questions which were then piloted, however, as the discussion below indicates, some questions on the first questionnaire were still ambiguous and / or did not sufficiently clarify the issue involved, or the answers to which created more questions. Indeed, question formulating is the thorniest part of questionnaire research, and a second questionnaire was called for to clarify some messy areas.

It was decided that both questionnaires for the teachers could be administered in an English format. All of the teachers in the department maintain sophisticated levels of English which

are more than sufficient for comprehending a questionnaire of this type.(11) When the first questionnaire was complete,(12) it was piloted by three of the teachers who were asked to make comments. After shortening and reformatting, the questionnaire in Appendix B was given to a total of 29 teachers. Fifteen completed and returned it.(13) For each answer, the percentage of the total number of respondents answering that particular question was calculated. In the second questionnaire (see Appendix C), each item was directly referenced against the gaps and ambiguous gray areas in the data and given to the same teachers, 13 of whom completed and returned it. Again, calculation was by the percentage of the number of respondents answering a particular question.(14) The percentages in both questionnaires were rounded off to the nearest percent.(15)

The questionnaire for the students was also in English as the writing class had been taught in English, and it was felt that there was nothing on the questionnaire that would cause comprehension problems for the students. Since there were only six respondents, percentages were not calculated.

Results and Discussion

In the first section on Background in the first questionnaire, the academic field of the respondents was indicated in Part One: three in British Literature, five in American Literature, five in Linguistics and two in Philology for a total of fifteen respondents. Respondents to the second questionnaire numbered four in British Literature, three in American Literature, three in Linguistics, two in Philology, and one unknown.(16) In Part Two of the first questionnaire, the number of years teaching averaged 14.36 among the respondents, while the average number of years teaching at this university was eight.

The Purpose of the Graduation Thesis

Part Three of the first questionnaire (Table 1, Appendix A) was to determine the purpose of a graduation thesis and six items were given. 73% responded *yes* to "to allow the student to explore a narrow topic in greater depth than possible in a normal course," while 20% answered *somewhat*, and 7%, one person, answered *no*. In answer to "to allow the student to read and do in-depth analysis of that reading or of data, with minimal help from a teacher," 53% responded *somewhat*, while 47% answered *yes*. It may be that the majority responded with *somewhat* because those teachers give more than minimal help to their students with in-depth analysis.

The item, "to demonstrate the student's ability to read and analyze" had a 93% response of *yes*, with only one person responding *somewhat*. "To demonstrate the student's ability to think and write in an orderly (academic) fashion" resulted in 93% for *yes*, and one *no* response. 60% responded *somewhat* to "to demonstrate a mastery of English," while 33% answered *yes*, and one person responded with a *no*. These responses would indicate that the student's ability to read and analyze, and to think and write in an academic fashion are more important than a demonstration of general mastery of English. This fits with the department's focus on content courses and its continued agreement on that stance.(17)

In answer to "to allow the student to create his or her own idea and then to prove the correctness of that idea with support from data collected through research," there were 67% who answered *yes*, and 33% who answered *somewhat*. One teacher wrote in that he or she considered giving "the students the experience of thinking and writing on a question that they have found" to be of importance. The same teacher also allowed that "the teacher could reflect on his or her own research methods" through taking a student through the process.

The results in this part indicate that the purpose of the graduation thesis is to allow the student a chance to explore a topic of the student's choice in greater depth and to do in-depth analysis which would not be possible in a normal course while at the same time demonstrating his or her ability to read, analyze, think (and write?) on that topic through proving the correctness of his or her theory in writing.

Originality in a Graduation Thesis

The purpose of Part Four in the first questionnaire (Table 2, Appendix A) was to determine the meaning of the word "originality" which had been connected to the graduation thesis in the conversation of several of the teacher / advisors. The first definition had been suggested by one of the teacher / advisors (Nakajima 95), but it seemed ambiguous to the researcher. Could it be that the undergraduate student was required to do something similar to what would be done in a graduate thesis or dissertation, or did it mean "different from and superior to" other undergraduate theses on the same topic?

Slightly over half, 53%, marked *yes* in answer to "clearly demonstrating in what respect(s) the thesis is different from and superior to other papers on the same topic." 33% answered *somewhat*, and 14% marked *no*. The second definition was to clarify the ambiguity. In answer to "clearly demonstrates proof of a *new* idea or opinion about the topic by the use

of support from data gathered by the student through research (library or empirical)," 33% suggested with *yes* that such high level work was required, while 67% responded with *somewhat*. As the difference was not made clear in the questions, this point was researched further in the second questionnaire, the results of which are discussed below.

Two American Literature professors indicated by writing in on the first questionnaire that the thesis must clearly demonstrate that the student had written the thesis by him or herself. This may indicate that "originality" means the student's own ideas as opposed to lavishly borrowing those of the critics. On the other hand, one Linguistics professor wrote in that "in an undergraduate thesis, not much originality can be expected although some is desirable. The least that can be expected is a critical review of past research on the topic." This teacher / advisor, at least, does not expect something that has not been done before. One teacher / advisor later noted in follow-up correspondence that "a few teachers regard this as the most important factor in a graduation thesis. But before that, students have to know how to write, how to express their opinions, etc." Another teacher / advisor also in follow-up correspondence noted that "'originality' is not so important [for him or her] as refraining from plagiarism. What is important is for the students to learn the basic techniques of writing academic papers in English. If we expect some originality in students' graduation theses, we will have to allow them to write in Japanese." The questionnaire items on the first questionnaire may have been geared to too high a level.

The second questionnaire clarified the issues somewhat (Table 3, Appendix A). When asked if "originality in a graduation thesis means something different from and superior to all other published papers on the same topic, i.e. a totally new idea that has never been published or discussed before in academic circles," only eleven of the thirteen responded. 64% of those answered *false*, while 36% indicated that it was *true*. One of the true answers added a note specifying that such a high degree of originality was not required in a graduation thesis, and two others indicated in notes further on in the questionnaire that this definition was the ideal, but was not always what could be expected.

In answer to "originality in a graduation thesis means something different from and superior to other graduation theses at TMU on the same topic," out of twelve responses, 75% demonstrated disagreement by marking *false*, while the remaining 25% agreed with a *true*. When "originality in a graduation thesis means the student's ideas as opposed to borrowing from critics or linguistic or Philology literature, or from a teacher of a course,

i.e. the ideas may not be totally new in the field," all thirteen responded, 92% of whom answered *true*, while only 8% (one person in American Literature) regarded it as *false*.

As the last question was the only one that elicited all thirteen responses, it may be that when a response was not indicated, it meant that the respondent disagreed. In that case, the data above would not reflect the true feelings of the respondents. This was not an issue in the first questionnaire as all the items were answered by all the respondents with the exception of some of the open ended questions. Later, on reflecting on the data and from conversations with various of the Literature professors, I discovered that I was approaching this from my own view, from my own concepts of what compromises research and an academic paper. I had begun this research without having fully cleared away my own assumptions.

One person in Linguistics wrote in that originality in a graduation thesis could also mean "finding problems or issues inherent in another scholar's analysis and then trying to solve those problems," i. e. critiquing previous work. Another in American Literature suggested that all a teacher could expect was that the students show "how independently they had learned to structure their arguments." And yet another in American Literature wrote that originality in a graduation thesis was when a student "does not copy, plagiarize, and says what he or she has to say."

The second questionnaire also attempted to discover the importance of originality in the graduation thesis (there is no table for this item; see the questionnaire in Appendix C, Section III, 1). The responses were all over the continuum in answer to the question, "for a hypothetical average to good student (in your estimation), to what degree is originality important in a thesis for you as the evaluator of that thesis?" Two British Literature responses and one from American Literature were near the "not so much" end, while Linguistics and two other British Literature responses were between the middle and the "extremely" end. One American Literature teacher marked the "extremely" end of the continuum. Apparently this is very much a case by case issue for individual teacher / advisors and has little relation to their field of specialization.

Most, 91% of the eleven responses, indicated agreement, *true*, to "for you, the degree of importance of originality in a thesis depends on that particular students' ability to think creatively" (Table 4, Appendix A). The one *false* answer was in Philology. Everyone answered the item on "for some students, the degree of the importance of originality in their

theses is not really an issue for me. For those students, just producing something is an effort." 77% responded *true*, while 23% thought it *false*. Only eleven responded to the item, "for some students, the degree of the importance of originality in their theses is very much an issue for me. For those students, a little effort can produce a good thesis with the students' own ideas." 64% indicated *true*, while 36% responded with a *false*. The items that elicited 100% responses may have been the most salient items to the respondents.

One American Literature teacher wrote in that "originality may end up being an awareness of the badness of plagiarism with the end result not having any originality" (by any of the definitions above) at all. Again, it could be that the definitions were geared to too high a level on the second questionnaire as well. However, if that were the case, there was a place to write in a definition, but no one did. In the final analysis, the issue of originality may be simply something different for each teacher in relation to each individual student.

The Importance of Some Aspects

The second Section of the first questionnaire was to determine the weight of importance of some aspects of the graduation thesis. The results in Table 5 (Appendix A) show that while the task, or research question, formulated by the student is important, 53% responded that it was not in the *very important* category. In the writing course, great importance had been assigned to the formulation of a research question, although the teacher had not felt the students had acquired the skill and had worried about it. The question about the importance of the content or ideas confirmed expectations with 60% responding *very important*. The two responses in the middle category of *3* were both in American Literature, and they had marked 5 (5=very important, 1=not important) for the research question and *3s* or *2s* for all the rest. Rhetorical aspects, another thing emphasized in the writing class, did not fare well with 47% responding with a *3*, 33% with a *4*, and only 20% with a *5*. Although the researcher had heard innumerable complaints about the miserable level of language use by the students in their theses, the results of the question on use of language, spelling, syntax and vocabulary, indicated that this was not such an important area with 47% answering *3*, and 33% answering *4*. Only 20% found it *very important*.

Three items were added in the second questionnaire (Table 6, Appendix A). 92% responded that "summarizing and paraphrasing ideas from other sources" were either *very important* or *relatively important*, while only one person in Linguistics answered that they were *not so important*. As for synthesizing information from multiple sources, the results were similar with the same linguist responding not so important. 8% (one person)

indicated that documenting sources was *very important*, 38% replied that it was *relatively important*, 46% felt it was *not so important*, and one person indicated that it was *not at all important*.(18) One person wrote in that "understanding the meaning of quoted examples" is *very important*, while another suggested that "the logical connection and extension of the student's argumentation" was important, and one linguist mentioned critique of pervious research.

For the quality or depth of and evidence of research in the first questionnaire (Table 5), 47% marked *4*, with 33% marking *3* (equally between very important and not important). It appears that content and ideas are more important than research. If it is important that the students have their own ideas, does this indicate that simply having those ideas is more important than proving those ideas with research? In a department that includes Literature, perhaps proving your ideas with quotes from the author of the work under scrutiny is not considered research. A more in-depth analysis of what constitutes research was in order.

Again the second questionnaire helped to clarify the issue somewhat. The first item here (Table 7, Appendix A) asked if "research for a graduation thesis is finding support for the student's own ideas in anything published or not published (e.g. lecture notes), but **NOT** including examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper." Responses indicate that this is not what research is; of ten responses, 80% circled *false*, the other 20% marked it as *true*. When the definition is "research for a graduation thesis is finding support for the student's own ideas by finding examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper, but **NOT** in anything else published or not published," 91% of the ten responses were *false*, while 9% (one person) circled *true*. On the other hand, when the definition is "research for a graduation thesis is finding support for the student's own ideas by finding examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper **AND** from anything else published or not published," 83% of the twelve responses indicate that this is *true*, and 17% suggest that it is *false*.

Also on the second questionnaire was an item which attempted to discover what type(s) of support the teacher / advisors most wanted, least wanted and would not accept (Table 8, Appendix A). 62% clearly showed that they would either not accept or would least like to see "the student's own ideas not backed up with any support from any other sources." No one indicated that this is what they would most like to see in a thesis. When the student's own ideas are "backed up with support from anything published or not published but **NOT**

including examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper," 23% indicated they would not accept it, and one teacher marked it as what he or she most wanted to see. However, when the student's own ideas are "backed up with support from examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper, but **NOT** in anything else published or not published," 54% indicated that it is second highest on their list of things they would most like to see, while 15 % left it blank showing that it would not be acceptable. When the students own ideas are "backed up with both types of support, 100% responded that this is what they would most like to see or would be second on their list of what they wanted to see. The last item was when someone else's ideas were "expanded further with examples from any type of other sources." Here, the answers were more diverse, although 31% indicated that this would be high on their list. These answers appear to mean that it is best for a student to employ both types of support, but if that is not possible, then it is preferable to use support from the novel, etc. that is the topic of the student's paper rather than from other published material. Such results are probably due in part to the fact that seven of the thirteen respondents were in Literature, and the questions may have not seemed relevant to the philologists and linguistics.

Wrapping up the section on research in the graduation thesis in the second questionnaire were two questions about the importance of original ideas on the part of the student and support for those ideas (Table 9, Appendix A). It was 50-50 for the item that claimed it is more important for the student to have his or her own ideas than to back up those ideas with support. On the other hand, 36% showed that it was more important that the student support any ideas he or she puts forth with any type of research whether or not those ideas are the student's own or not. 64% answered this with a *false*. Again, does this mean that having original ideas is more important than supporting those ideas or proving those ideas? Isn't it necessary to support any ideas, original or not? One teacher wrote in that this was a difficult question as both are important. The results here still pose the same question as the results of the first questionnaire!(19) In retrospect, I believe this shows that indeed both are important, but students must have ideas before the issue of support for those ideas can even come up.

The first questionnaire (Table 5) shows that the process of doing research and writing is fairly important with 53% answering *4*, and 27% indicating a *5* (5=very important, 1=not important). The question on the importance of a thesis being different from and superior to other works on the same topic resulted in answers in the center. The second questionnaire

shed some light on this by showing that, in most cases, originality means "original" for the student, not necessarily for the field.

The question concerning the importance of development in the first questionnaire indicates that the amount, kinds and quality of support are fairly important with 60% answering *4* (5=very important, 1=not important). It is also important that the support actually support or illustrate the points made in the paper with 40% answering *4*, and 27% answering *5*, although 33% answered *3*. However, the results reported from the second questionnaire just above may mean that an original idea for a student is more important than any support.

Although in the writing class it is important that the students undertake the discipline of using the MLA format correctly, answers on the first questionnaire indicate that most of the teacher / advisors consider it of less importance (in relation to other aspects?) with 40% marking it a *3*, 33% a *4*, and 13% and 7% a *2* and *1* respectively (5=very important, 1=not important). One professor wrote in that "the punctuality of appointments" was *very important*. He may have had a delinquent advisee last year. Lack of punctuality and absenteeism are common complaints among teacher / advisors.

Aspects in Detail

In Section Three of the first questionnaire (Table 10, Appendix A) further details of some of the aspects from Section Two were investigated. The first part examines content and ideas. The answers to the question on the importance of originality of the central idea found in the thesis statement show that this is quite important with 47% marking a *5*, 40% a *4*, and 13% a *3* (5=very important, 1=not important). This would indicate that "difference from and superiority to other works on the same topic" may not be the definition of originality even though 53% of the responses marked *yes* to the question in Section 1-4-a discussed above - unless "other works" means other undergraduate theses on the same topic. According to the responses to Section 1-4-b, the "original idea" in the thesis statement does not have to be a "new idea." Clearly, some further investigation was called for here as well, and this was accomplished by the second questionnaire discussed above.

A further question on the second questionnaire, however, may confuse the issue again (Table 11, Appendix A). 71% of seven responses marked *false* for the statement that "the central idea in the thesis statement must be original" as defined by the respondent in section 1 of the second questionnaire. 29% answered *true*, but six did not respond at all. The

other question in this section claimed that "the central idea in the thesis statement must be the student's own idea even if it is not original" as defined by the respondent earlier. To this all thirteen responded with 92% answering *true*, and one person marking false. These responses appear to be contradictory in light of the majority definition of "originality," although they certainly go along with the emphasis seen earlier on the student's *own* idea. Such results perhaps allow for the fact that some of the *true* responses claiming that "originality in a graduation thesis means something different from and superior to all other published papers on the same topic, i.e. a totally new idea that has never been published or discussed in academic circles" and that it "means something different from and superior to other graduation theses at TMU on the same topic" are how the respondents would normally define "originality," but that more realistic expectations for the majority of the graduation theses is that "originality" means "the student's own ideas as opposed to borrowing from critics or linguistic or Philology literature."

The second part of Table 5 for the first questionnaire looks in more detail at rhetorical aspects with "the paper clearly has an introduction with background and the thesis statement, a body which supports the thesis statement, and a conclusion," "clarity of meaning" and "coherence" all had the majority of responses in the *4s* or *5s* (5=very important, 1=not important). Unity, however, showed 60% at *4*, and 20% at *5* and *3* respectively. Being defined as "when everything supports the thesis statement and nothing is superfluous" (Oshima & Hogue 37), this rather important aspect of writing for native speakers appears to be of less importance here.

The third part of Table 10 throws some light on what aspects are important about the use of language. Spelling did not appear to be as important as the researcher had been led to believe from listening to the talk of the teachers / advisors. 40% marked it a *3*, 33% marked it a *4*, and only 27% marked it a *5* (5=very important, 1=not important). The correctness of syntax showed 46% marking a *5*, and 27% were *4* and *3* respectively. Appropriateness of syntax showed 60% at *4*, and 20% at *3* and *5* respectively. On the other hand, syntactic variety was not very popular with 54% at *3*. General mastery of English did not appear to be very important with 47% indicating a *4* and 33% a *3*. Appropriate word choice did not appear to be so vital either with 60% at *4* and only one person marking a *5*.

Not surprisingly, syntactic correctness proved to be the most important aspect of language use although all the others, with the exception of syntactic variety, made a good showing.

It would be interesting to know why syntactic correctness is important. Is it important to make meaning clear to the reader, or to demonstrate that the students have mastered the syntax which they have rigorously applied themselves to learning for many years, or because faulty syntax may indicate faulty logic or fuzzy thinking, or a combination of the three?

The second questionnaire (Table 12, Appendix A) investigates this issue with 54% marking that syntactic correctness was important for all three reasons, and 46% indicating that it was "to make meaning clear to the reader." 15% marked that it was "to demonstrate that the student has mastered the syntax which he or she has been learning for many years," and only 8% (one linguist) felt that "faulty syntax may indicate faulty logic or fuzzy thinking."(20) One teacher wrote in that "syntactic correctness is one indicator of how eagerly the student has devoted him / herself to writing the thesis. Writing in correct English requires consulting dictionaries, books and other materials which is good training for the student."

The part on research in the first questionnaire (Table 10) shows that the "length and quality of bibliography" is only of middle importance with 60% marking a *3*, 27% a *2*, and 13% a *4* (5=very important, 1=not important). "References in the paper" also did not fare very well with 53% at *3*, 40% at *4* and one person marking *2*. On the other hand, "depth of analysis or comparison of data" had 67% marking a *4* and 20% a *5*, while two people marked a *3*. It is hoped that this does not mean that analyzing some data (unless that data is original) is more important than giving the source of that data although that is what it appears to be indicating. Plagiarism is very serious. A paper that purports to be a serious piece of academic discourse in the English language tradition cannot endorse plagiarism. Perhaps the questions were not clear. Certainly more research was called for.

On the second questionnaire the section on plagiarism (Table 13, Appendix A) first dealt with the definition of plagiarism. The statement that plagiarism is when, without any citation, "the student uses in his or her graduation thesis any published material at all," was marked by all thirteen respondents as their definition. In addition, 38% marked that plagiarism is when "your [the teacher's] idea(s) as you have expressed them in a class or in a private meeting with the student" are used by that student without a citation. Also, that "any unpublished manuscripts, recordings, letters, conversations, etc." used without citation are plagiarism was marked by 31%.

The next question dealing with plagiarism was "analyzing data is more important than giving the source of the data," the question that surfaced above. As seen in Table 14 (Appendix A), 55% of the thirteen responded *true*, and only 45% indicated *false*. One person in British Literature wrote in that both were important, and a Generative Grammarian explained that it is very difficult for students to come up with example sentences so they use ones that are already published and don't cite the source.(20) However, that does not explain why those in American Literature and Philology would answer this way.(22) In later reflection on Literature theses, when students are engaged in something like a "symbol hunt" in a novel, the only real data source is the page number so analyzing is relatively more important.

The Writing Process

Section Four of the first questionnaire was concerned with the process by which the student is to proceed with the thesis and contained two open-ended questions (there is no table for these items; see the questionnaire in Appendix B, Section IV). The first part asked the respondents if they ask their students "to follow a specific process for doing research and writing the graduation thesis", and "to briefly outline the steps if they do.

The responses were, of course, varied. Those in American Literature generally responded that the student had to first decide on an author or novel, and through reading, determine the thesis on which he or she would write. One teacher / advisor wrote that through persistent questioning of a student, he or she was able to uncover what the student did not know about the subject, and that (what they did not know) was "to be the question to be dealt with in the thesis." Another wrote that "the student is to take notes while reading the novel(s), and based on those notes, write an essay about the text." The student then surveys scholarship related to the topic and writes a draft of the thesis. One indicated that he or she only recommends that the student read a few articles on the topic.

Teacher / advisors in British Literature wrote much the same about the process they advise. One said that he or she requires monthly appointments during the summer vacation when the student must bring a newly written chapter to each meeting. Another wrote that he or she has the student "analyze the theme from various aspects and develop ideas - making an outline helps this process." Two of them indicated that they require their advisees to attend the weekend retreat devoted to graduation theses for fourth year students.(23)

As for Linguistics, there is pretty general agreement that the student first choose the topic, then read relevant literature, "build up a hypothesis which can account for all the relevant examples," and write several drafts on which the advisor comments. One teacher /advisor specified that "originality" was required and that the student must prove the correctness of the hypothesis. On the other hand, one respondent wrote that the least requirement is that the student "compare and summarize past work, and if the student is competent, I will expect him/her to propose new ideas of his /her own."

In Philology, one teacher / advisor noted that making a bibliography and collecting data was first, followed by an outline and writing the paper. The other responded that having first gathered previous scholarship, the student would need to criticize it and finally add some comments and opinions of the student's own.

Everyone seems to be in agreement that doing at least some research / reading about the topic is beneficial, although the Literature people seem to want their students to have their own ideas and not rely on the previously published ideas of others. Linguistics and Philology require much more evidence of knowledge of the relevant literature, and some teachers / advisors require their students to do their own data gathering.

In order to determine whether or not the existing writing course syllabus was teaching what the students would be required to do and to determine in more detail how the writing was to proceed, a question, "what section of the thesis do you usually have the students write first," was included in this section as part two. The advisors / teachers in American Literature indicated that they ask their advisees to first write "the introduction," "first chapter," "thesis statement," or "the part that contains the theme or question to solve in the thesis." One respondent continued with "what the student thinks is the most important part," indicating that the student has some choice in the matter. One respondent specified that the draft was first followed by the body and then the conclusion, without indicating when the introduction was to be written. Those in British Literature generally responded in a similar way: "the introduction which later will be revised," "the introduction which clarifies the main theme of the thesis." However, one respondent wrote, "the introduction and conclusion last." It would appear that those in Literature generally regard the introduction / thesis statement as the beginning point in the writing.

Two of the respondents in Linguistics responded that the "literature review" was the first thing, while one wrote that "the introduction or proposal" would come first, and one said

that it differs according to the student. It is not surprising that the literature review should come first in a Linguistics paper where the writer has to first establish background to his or her own thesis. One respondent in Philology wrote that the "literature review" was first, while the other indicated that it was "up to the student."

Evaluation

The purpose of Section Five in the first questionnaire (see Table 15, Appendix A) was to delve into the evaluation process. The researcher had heard numerous opinions about the importance of student effort, the fact that the thesis must be the student's own work, and that the student must not get any help with the English in the thesis. The results of the survey showed that the process is important with 71% marking that they disagreed with the statement that "the process doesn't need to be evaluated because the final product will reflect the amount of effort put in during the year." Only 29% indicated that they agreed. In answer to "some proof must be seen by the supervisor to show that the submitted thesis is primarily the student's own work (such as preliminary drafts, the data collected, a working bibliography, etc.)," 80% agreed. Surprisingly, 80% marked *agree* to the statement that "it is acceptable for the student to get help with the English." It would be interesting to know from whom this help could be gotten, a native speaker or the teacher / advisor, and to what extent, proofing or totally rewriting.(24)

The second questionnaire provided some insights on these issues (Table 16, Appendix A). 92% indicated that a student could receive help with the English in his or her thesis from the student's advisor. 54% responded that help could be gotten from a native speaker, and 46% marked from another teacher. A linguist added that the students of Linguistics are helped by graduate students in various phases. One person wrote in that help could also be gotten from a friend or a senior.(25)

The question concerned with the extent of the help the student could receive showed a range of responses (there is no table for this item; see the questionnaire in Appendix C, Section IX, 2). One teacher in British Literature was quite close to "no help" at one end of the continuum while one in American Literature was halfway between "proofreading" and "totally rewriting" on the other end. The rest were scattered between with the majority near the center, "proofreading," but leaning toward the "totally rewriting" end. One person wrote in that it is "suggestions for rewriting" that he or she gives, while another stated that it was "advice and suggestions," and a third wrote that "it depends on the English the students write."

After seeing the results of the first questionnaire, it was felt that winding up the section on evaluation criteria with an open-ended question on what criteria the advisor uses to evaluate a thesis would have provided valuable insights into the evaluation process. For that reason, the second questionnaire dealt with this issue (see the questionnaire in Appendix C, Section X).

In answer to the question, "what process do you use to evaluate a graduation thesis" one of the two in British Literature who answered this question checks the validity of the ideas - if they are possible or not, and then "checks the expression, mainly grammar." Another first evaluates the student's ideas followed by evaluating his or her skills and syntactic correctness.

Those in American Literature all had different processes. One wrote that he or she checked the logical organization, if the ideas were the student's own and if the thesis was relevant to the field. Another said that checking the sources was followed by looking at the quotes and interviewing the student. The third looked at how interesting the paper was and the sources, and then "evaluated it as an English composition."(26)

Two linguists answered this question. One said he or she checks for originality, organization and "writing ability" (syntactic correctness?). The other checks if it is clearly written, that the thesis is original and whether the thesis is supported by reliable evidence.

For the philologists, one mentioned that the first point in the evaluation process was "the student's attitude to the graduation thesis," meaning was he or she enthusiastic. Following that was whether the investigation of the subject matter was "fresh," and "the investigator's contribution to the field." The other checked the consistency of the content first, and then the student's grasp of the quoted examples, and finally the "errors in English."

The teacher who did not declare his or her sub-department begins by first checking whether the student "can make what s/he wants to say clear" and then evaluating "according to his or her ability." The last point is "how much effort s/he makes to write" the thesis.

The evaluation process appears to be quite an individual matter; not many trends or similarities can be detected even within the sub-departments, the only exception being syntactic correctness which seems universally popular. As discussed above, syntactic

correctness is important for all the reasons listed, but particularly because it makes the meaning clear for the reader.

The next item asked the teacher / advisors to list the three most important criteria by which they evaluate a graduation thesis. For the three respondents in British Literature, the top three criteria were "the validity of the idea," a "close reading of the work" under study and "originality." The number two slot went to "expression" (including syntactic correctness, or only the way the student expresses him/herself?), "persuasiveness," and the "student's way of developing ideas - unity and synthesis." The third place was "understanding of the work" by the student, "English" (syntactic correctness?), and "syntactic correctness or expression."

For American Literature, top place went to "logical organization," "originality," and "coherence as an argument," while second place included "the student's thinking for him/herself," "consistency," and "how much the student believes in the argument." The third criteria were "linguistic elegance," "perspective (methodology)," and the "significance or attractiveness of what the student says."

The linguists were looking for whether the "student has his or her own ideas," "clarity," and "overall organization." Second on their list were a "demonstration of the ability to analyze the relevant data to support" his or her idea, "originality," and "consistency of argument," while third were "the student's demonstration of his or her ability to write good English" (syntactic correctness?), "factual data," and "syntactic correctness."

In Philology, the two teacher / advisors were most interested in "previous scholarship" and "a convincing conclusion and method." Second for them were "development of logic" and "do the data include all that are concerned?" The third items for them were "originality of conclusion" and "does the student understand the data correctly - quoted examples?"

"How well it articulates what s/he wants to say" is first on the list for the undeclared teacher / advisor. The second point is "how articulate his or her English is," and third "how much I could 'empathize' with it."

Other than syntactic correctness or "good English," other general concerns appear to be a demonstration of an understanding of what the student is writing about, and an ability to express ideas that are original for him or her in a consistent and logical manner. These are

no mean undertakings for anyone in their native language, let alone in a second one. The criteria indicate quite high level expectations, but in practice, to what level can these criteria be applied?

Student Evaluation of the Writing Class

In order to determine what the students themselves deem important or helpful preparation for embarking on their graduation theses, a questionnaire (see Appendix D) was administered to the students who had just completed writing and defending their theses at the end of their senior year in February of 1996. At the end of the defense interview the advising teacher asked the student to fill out the questionnaire and return it to the researcher before leaving the campus. Six of the ten completed the questionnaire.

The question on the biggest problem experienced by the student in writing the thesis elicited several answers: writing English, deciding the theme, the differences between English and Japanese, "placing the conclusion at the beginning of the paragraph",(27) having "few variations for one expression." Most of these responses indicate problems with using the language itself. Had they not had the writing class the year before, one wonders what the responses would have been: the same or possibly different?

The second question was aimed at discovering if the student had any ideas about what the writing class could have done to help with that particular problem. Responses varied from "I think that helped partly" to "I think this is basically my problem" with others being "I learned that it was important for me to write easy English," "I could write short paragraphs using English rhetoric" and "I have no idea." Other problems encountered in writing the thesis were in using conjunctions, doing research, locating reference books, getting ideas together, integrating quotes in writing, and getting meaning across in English. Even though the class had done quite a lot of work in all of these areas (conjunctions, doing research and locating references, brainstorming and organizing ideas, integrating others' words and ideas into writing, and dealing with meaning), these are still very problematic areas for the students.

The ranking question was to determine which aspects of the class had indeed been helpful to the student in the final analysis of writing the graduation thesis. Five out of six responses were *5*, the highest ranking, for the research paper confirming the researchers intuition (5=very helpful, 1=not at all helpful). As for practicing MLA, only two ranked it as *5*. It is possible that some or all of the others had to use another format in writing their

thesis for their particular advisor particularly as three of the responses were a dismal *2*.(28) All the responses were either *5* or *4* for "studying the rhetorical aspects of writing in English," again confirming the teacher's intuition.(29) However, contrary to expectation, the spelling dictionary received only *2s* and *1s*. This was a required text and its use was expected in the class as misspelled words could result in a lower grade on a paper. "Evaluating papers and rewriting" received four *5s* and two *4s* gladdening the heart of the researcher.(30) Five *5s* and one *1* was given to teacher corrections and comments on papers.(31) "Brainstorming for ideas," another thing that each student was required to do and hand in for comment throughout the year, did not fare well receiving only one *4* with the rest of the responses being *3* or *1*.(32)

The students indicated that they learned "keeping consistency," "grammar," "the attitude for writing," "how to read novels," "the contents" and "expressions and words that are frequently used in theses and how to use them" from their advisors and not in the writing class. As for the last item, with students from four fields all together in one writing class, it is not possible to teach specialized lexis for each field. Again, it is wished that follow-up interviews were possible for the first three items to determine what was actually meant.

All of the respondents indicated that they had completed the writing class and that it had been "quite helpful in preparing me for writing a graduation thesis." In the comments section, one suggested that in the writing class the students be given "good" theses to read and analyze as to why they were "good", definitely a good idea and one that the teacher had been debating whether or not would be worth the time involved. Perhaps it would be, at least to try. Certainly for the teacher, doing some rough and ready discourse analysis on "good theses" followed up with discussions with teacher / advisors in the field would be a productive method of analysis. The problem has been one of locating "good theses" that more than one teacher in a field considers to be "good" and that this writing teacher also considers "good."

Conclusion

In conclusion several issues emerge, the first and certainly not the least being that doing this kind of research is of great value to the teacher of such a class. For one thing, it demonstrates again the value of research over hearsay and intuition. The results on several questions countered what the researcher had expected from listening to the comments and complaints of the teacher / advisors over the years. Also, several items went against the researchers intuition or gut feelings.

In addition, several things that the researcher considers important, such as the rhetorical aspects of writing in English, were deemed of less importance by the department than other areas such as content. Of course, in the writing class, content is very important, but the students are writing about more general topics such as the environment rather than the specialized areas of the department, and content and rhetoric probably share similar levels of importance. The difference here is probably due to the fact that in content courses, content is emphasized, while writing classes emphasize writing.

Also, in retrospect, as the sources on doing research with questionnaires indicated, formulating the questions for a questionnaire is a difficult task. As Nunan (p. 145) maintains, "it is important to be very clear about the objectives of the study, and each item should be directly referenced against one or more of the research objectives." Although the objectives seemed clear enough, and having thought that each item was referenced against those objectives, when the results of the first questionnaire were tabulated and analyzed, it became obvious that there were a lot of loose ends, some areas still gray, ambiguous questions, and many areas not touched upon at all. Even though the first questionnaire was too long, it did not cover everything, nor did it cover what it did cover very well in some cases, necessitating a second questionnaire to fill in the gaps.

The second questionnaire revealed gaps in my understanding of what sorts of topics students write about, especially in Literature, so that now the Literature teacher/advisors are answering a questionnaire to shed some light on that aspect.

Reflecting on my own analysis of the data and having discussions with some of the other teacher/advisors after my analysis has shown that my own view of research colored not only my interpretations but the questions themselves in both questionnaires, and that, perhaps more than anything else, has created the problems in the data. Through doing this research, the limitations in my own thinking and conceptualizations have become obvious. Not only will my teaching and the students benefit in the end, but the act of doing this research has allowed not just deeper understanding, which is what I expected, but also a broader understanding of the environment in which I work.

Notes

1. The author is grateful to all the teachers in the English department whose time and energy were expended in answering two rather long questionnaires. Without their time and effort, there would be no results.

2. According to the *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*, a needs analysis or needs assessment (in language teaching) is "the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners requires a language and arranging the needs according to priorities. Needs assessment . . . seeks to obtain information on:

(a) the situations in which a language will be used (including *who* it will be used *with*)

(b) the objectives and purposes for which the language is needed

(c) the types of communication that will be used (eg written, spoken, formal, informal)

(d) the level of proficiency that will be required

Needs assessment is a part of curriculum development and is normally required before a syllabus can be developed for language teaching" (p. 189).

3. A graduation thesis is not an absolute requirement for graduation from the English department. A student can choose to write a thesis or take a graduation studies course that is basically reading broadly in the field of the student's choice. However, students are encouraged to write a thesis particularly those who have any ideas of applying to a graduate school. The students say that the graduation studies course is sometimes so difficult that writing a thirty page thesis in English is easy by comparison.

4. In follow-up correspondence one of the teacher / advisors suggested that being able "to learn on your own" to write a thirty page thesis in English was difficult thirty or forty years ago, but now, as the English language requirements in junior and senior high school have been reduced, it is too much to expect of students to be able to do it all on their own today. In addition, the number of students studying in universities has greatly increased resulting again in lower requirements. As a result, the gap between the expectation [of students abilities] and the reality [of those abilities] has widened.

5. Prior to entering this class the students have rarely, if ever, written anything longer than a sentence in English, and that was in high school. Some, however, do take the one year Composition course as Sophomores before entering this one, and invariably their writing both before and after this class is much better that those who had only taken the third year Expression class.

6. In follow-up correspondence, one of the teacher-advisors noted that the teacher of the third year writing course was confusing "two separate problems and seek[ing] to solve them both in a single course." The problems were outlined as:

a) How to teach the students to use the basic tools of academic research, such as the OED, DNB, concordances, standard texts, academic journals, and guides to publications, and then to put the results into an academically acceptable form, referring to such aids as the MLA style sheet or its equivalent in Japan.

b) How to raise the level of students' ability in English composition to a level at which they could write up their research in English and get the article published abroad.

One response is that courses combining basic, general research techniques and academic writing are the norm at an upper level in ESL, EFL, and for native-speakers. It is generally felt that both are aspects of writing and as such, belong together. A further comment by the same teacher-advisor that it would be more expedient to separate the two functions with the research end being taught in Japanese leaving the native-speaker to deal only with improving the students' writing can only be responded to with a resounding Yes. In actual practice that is what is being done. The writing class does not attempt to teach students anything more than the rudimentary basics of library research, and even that is insufficient due to lack of time. It is necessary for the students' teacher / advisors to teach their students the research skills required for their particular discipline.

As for b, "the ability in English composition" is not the only requirement for publishing in a journal abroad. In fact, for a good editor, the level of English itself does not have to match that of a native speaker. Of primary importance is the content which must be an 'original' and important contribution to the field. Naturally, the English must be sufficiently comprehensible to convey the content. Most editors are constantly on the look out for non native speaker contributors to the field and make some allowances for the English.

7. The grade the student receives is usually determined through discussion by the advising teacher and another teacher selected by the advisor to read the thesis and assist the advisor in questioning the student during a defense interview. Sometimes the second teacher, like the advisor, also works with the student throughout the entire period. In that case, the student has more than one source of advice.

8. Even though the writing class must meet the needs of the department as a whole, it was felt that it would be useful to be able to advise students of what might be expected of them from their individual sub-departments and to guide them in that direction with their writing. This would only be possible, of course, when the students know what their sub-

department is going to be, but as of July 1996, 90% of the third year students in the Expression class did not even know whether they were doing Linguistics or Literature.

9. For example, there are thirty-one teachers in the department, each with a busy schedule.

10. In discussing the graduation thesis with several teachers over the years, the issue of originality in a thesis had come up again and again as important. It was felt that knowing what is meant by "originality" in a thesis, and just how important it is to the department as a whole, would be informative for the teacher of the writing class allowing her to improve student preparation.

11. To be certain that the definitions of the terms research question, thesis statement, coherence and unity were the same for the researcher and the respondents, definitions were provided in the questionnaire (see Appendix B, Notes to the Questionnaire).

12. The author is grateful to Tom Robb and Deborah Foremen-Takano for suggestions and recommendations on earlier drafts of the questionnaire.

13. Although this response rate appears to be very low (51.73%), it must be remembered that not all of the teachers in the department advise students on their theses, although potentially all can; while, on the other hand, some teachers consistently have several advisees each year. It depends on the popularity of the field and to some extent, on the seniority of the teachers. (See Smith [230] for an insightful discussion of response rate problems.)

14. If an item is not responded to by a certain respondent, does it mean that it is not salient to that respondent, the response is a negative one, or that it was overlooked? Could the reason(s) be on a case by case basis for each item?

15. This paper has been put together in such a fashion that the time conscious reader can either read the paper or only refer to the tables of the results. In the latter recourse, however, the reader is cut off from information important to interpreting those results, and in addition does not benefit from the scintillating analysis of the results. Probably, the best method remains to simultaneously deal with both the written text and the tables.

16. This respondent failed to mark the area of specialization.

17. Within the department few language skills courses are offered like those in an English Language Program; there are only two levels of conversation classes and the two writing courses although there is a year of reading given in the required Freshmen and Sophomore English classes for all the students in the university, and some of the other Freshmen and Sophomore classes are now focusing on more communicative aspects of English.

18. When sources are not documented, it is plagiarism. Is it possible that plagiarism is being condoned? There must be another explanation for these responses.

19. Perhaps the issue is that it is necessary for students to have ideas before they can be backed up. The questions in both questionnaires assumed that the students have ideas; perhaps that assumption cannot be so readily taken, or that getting ideas must be the first order of business.

20. One wonders what the responses would have been if the question had been about the student's native language.

21. Strictly speaking, they should be citing the sources of these borrowed sentences unless the sentences are in common use.

22. Sometimes it is a pity that questionnaires are anonymous. Most likely issues like this one could be cleared up by a brief explanation on the part of the respondent, like that for the linguists.

23. The students in the department plan and ask teachers to take part in a weekend retreat at the university lodge on the last weekend in September each year. This retreat is for the fourth year students who are writing their theses and also for third year and second year students who are planning to write a graduation thesis. Several teachers attend and advise each student after hearing an oral presentation on the thesis by the student. At least one teacher / advisor in the department does not allow his students to attend.

24. This also brings up the question of fairness. If one student receives help, shouldn't the others? At least one respondent in the survey does extensive rewriting of the student's work. There is the issue that a thesis becomes a permanent record of the student's work under the guidance of a specific teacher / advisor and as such reflects perhaps even more upon that teacher than it does upon the student. This is especially true if the student is applying for graduate school.

25. Quite frankly, as "another teacher" and the only native speaker in the department, this researcher sincerely hopes the results of this questionnaire do not become common knowledge to the students in the English department. The results could be somewhat overwhelming.

26. How are English compositions evaluated?

27. Oh dear!

28. It would be impractical if not impossible to teach several different systems in the third year writing class. The teacher was advised to teach MLA as probably a majority of the advisors insist, or at least allow, their students to use it. If that is not the case, APA or some other system should be taught. At any rate this also requires further investigation. Unfortunately, this was not covered in the second questionnaire and will have to be investigated at a later time.

29. The interesting aspect to this finding is that the teacher / advisor responses had been less enthusiastic about rhetoric. Only 20% had responded that it was very important, while 33% indicated above average in importance, and 47% marked it as being of middle importance (see Table 5, Appendix A).

30. From the first paragraph written in the class, the students evaluate each other's writing according to evaluation criteria, giving each other suggestions for rewriting. Every paper completed throughout the year has a minimum of five drafts, meaning four rewrites. The teacher of this course believes that learning to rewrite is learning to write, for everyone, native speaker and non native speaker alike.

31. This is another time when it was wished that questionnaires were not anonymous. Why did all that time and effort on the teacher's part go unappreciated? Sigh!

32. Perhaps part of the problem here is that the students were unable to use this method for generating ideas on a paper of this length (approximately thirty pages) even though it had been helpful in shorter papers. Another possible explanation is that the teacher / advisors request their students to employ other methods for idea generation and the organizing of those ideas.

33. English Expression is the name of the third year writing class.

Appendix A
Tables

Table 1 (Questionnaire 1)

I. Background 3. The Purpose of the Graduation Thesis

What is the purpose of the graduation thesis?	*Yes*	*Somewhat*	*No*
a) To allow the student to explore a narrow topic in greater depth than possible in a normal course	73%	20%	7%
b) To allow the student to read and do in-depth analysis of that reading, or of data, with minimal help from a teacher	47%	53%	0%
c) To demonstrate the student's ability to read and analyze	93%	7%	0%
d) To demonstrate the student's ability to think and write in an orderly (academic) fashion	93%	0%	7%
e) To demonstrate a mastery of English	33%	60%	7%
f) To allow the student to create his or her own idea and then to prove the correctness of that idea with support from data collected through research	67%	33%	0%
g) Other	7%	0%	0%

Table 2 (Questionnaire 1)

I. Background 4. The Meaning of "Originality" in the Graduation Thesis

What is the meaning of "originality" in the graduation thesis?	*Yes*	*Somewhat*	*No*
a) Clearly demonstrating in what respect(s) the thesis is different from and superior to other papers on the same topic	53%	33%	14%
b) Clearly demonstrates proof of a *new* idea or opinion about the topic by the use of support from data gathered by the student through research (library or empirical)	33%	67%	0%
c) Other	0%	0%	0%

Table 3 (Questionnaire 2)

The Meaning of "Originality" in a Graduation Thesis

Originality in a graduation thesis means	*True*	*False*
1. something different from and superior to all other published papers on the same topic, i.e. a totally new idea that has never been published or discussed in academic circles.	36%	64%
2. something different from and superior to other graduation theses at TMU on the same topic.	25%	75%
3. the student's ideas as opposed to borrowing from critics or linguistics or Philology literature, or from a teacher of a course, i.e. the ideas may not be totally new in the field.	92%	8%
4. Other	23%	

Table 4 (Questionnaire 2)

The Importance of Originality in a Graduation Thesis

Items	*True*	*False*
2. For you, the degree of importance of originality in a thesis depends on that particular student's ability to think creatively.	91%	9%
3. For some students, the degree of the importance of originality in their theses is not really an issue for me. For those students, just producing something is an effort.	77%	23%
4. For some students, the degree of the importance of originality in their theses is very much an issue for me. For those students, a little effort can produce a good thesis with the student's own ideas.	64%	36%

Table 5 (Questionnaire 1)

II. Weight of Importance of Some Aspects of the Graduation Thesis

Weight of importance of some aspects of the graduation thesis	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
1. The task formulated by the student / the research question	47%	53%	0%	0%	0%
2. Content / ideas	60%	27%	13%	0%	0%
3. Rhetorical aspects / organization	20%	33%	47%	0%	0%
4. Use of language (spelling, syntax, vocabulary)	20%	33%	47%	0%	0%
5. Research (quality / depth of & evidence of)	13%	47%	33%	7%	0%
6. Process of doing research and writing	27%	53%	20%	0%	0%
7. Difference from & superiority to other works on the same topic	7%	27%	39%	27%	0%
8. Development (the amount, kinds & quality of support)	13%	60%	27%	0%	0%
9. Support (how well the details support or illustrate the points made in the paper)	27%	40%	33%	0%	0%
10. Format (MLA)	7%	33%	40%	13%	7%
11. Other	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%

5 = very important, 1 = not important

Table 6 (Questionnaire 2)

The Importance of Skills Related to Academic Writing

Items	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*
Summarizing & paraphrasing ideas from other sources	15%	77%	8%	0%
Synthesizing information from multiple sources	69%	23%	8%	0%
Documenting sources (making citations in the paper & preparing a works cited list)	8%	38%	46%	8%

1 = very important, 2 = relatively important, 3 = not so important, 4 = not at all important

Table 7 (Questionnaire 2)

The Meaning of Research in a Graduation Thesis

Research for a graduation thesis is finding support for the student's own ideas	*True*	*False*
1. in anything published or not published (e.g. lecture notes), but **NOT** including examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper.	20%	80%
2. by finding examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper, but **NOT** in anything else published or not published.	9%	91%
3. by finding examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper **AND** from anything else published or not published.	83%	17%

Table 8 (Questionnaire 2)

Acceptability of Support

I will accept	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*NA*
the student's own ideas not backed up with any support from any other sources.	0%	8%	15%	15%	31%	31%
the student's own ideas backed up with support from anything published or not published but **NOT** including examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper.	8%	8%	23%	23%	15%	23%
the student's own ideas backed up with support from examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper, but **NOT** in anything else published or not published.	0%	54%	31%	0%	0%	15%
the student's own ideas backed up with both types of support.	92%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%
someone else's ideas (not the student's, could be the teacher's or published materials) expanded further with examples from any type of other sources.	8%	23%	23%	23%	15%	8%

1 = that which the advisor would most like to see, 5 = that which the advisor would least like to see, NA = not acceptable / not answered

Table 9 (Questionnaire 2)

Importance of Ideas Vs Support through Research

Items	*True*	*False*
It is more important to me that the student have his/her own ideas than supporting those ideas with any type of research.	50%	50%
It is more important to me that the student support any ideas he/she puts forth with any type of research than that those ideas be the student's own ideas.	36%	64%

Table 10 (Questionnaire 1)

III. Aspects in Detail

1. Content / ideas	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
a) originality of the central ideas as found in the thesis statement	47%	40%	13%	0%	0%
b) other	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%
2. Rhetorical aspects / organization	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
a) the paper clearly has an introduction, a body & conclusion	40%	47%	13%	0%	0%
b) clarity of meaning	47%	53%	0%	0%	0%
c) coherence	47%	40%	13%	0%	0%
d) unity	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%
e) other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
3. Use of language	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
a) spelling	27%	33%	40%	0%	0%
b) grammar / syntax (appropriateness)	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%
c) grammar / syntax (correctness)	46%	27%	27%	0%	0%
d) syntactic variety	0%	13%	54%	33%	0%
e) general mastery of English	20%	47%	33%	0%	0%
f) appropriate word choice	7%	60%	13%	20%	0%
g) other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4. Research	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
a) length & quality of bibliography	0%	13%	60%	27%	0%
b) references in the paper / footnotes	0%	40%	53%	7%	0%
c) depth of analysis or comparison of data	20%	67%	13%	0%	0%
d) other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

5 = very important, 1 = not important

Table 11 (Questionnaire 2)

The Central Idea in the Thesis Statement

Items	*True*	*False*
1. The central idea in the thesis statement must be original (as you have defined it above).	29%	71%
2. The central idea in the thesis statement must be the student's own idea even if it is not original (as you have defined it above).	92%	8%

Table 12 (Questionnaire 2)

The Importance of Syntactic Correctness

Why is syntactic correctness important in a graduation thesis?	%
To make meaning clear to the reader	46%
To demonstrate that the student has mastered the syntax which he she has been learning for many years	15%
Faulty syntax may indicate faulty logic or fuzzy thinking	8%
All of the above	54%
None of the above	0%

Table 13 (Questionnaire 2)

The Definition of Plagiarism

Without any citation, if the student uses in his or her graduation thesis	%
your idea(s) as you have expressed them in a class or in a private meeting with the student.	38%
any published material at all.	100%
any unpublished manuscripts, recordings, letters, conversation, etc.	31%

Table 14 (Questionnaire 2)

Analyzing Data Vs Giving the Source of the Data

Item	*True*	*False*
Analyzing data is more important than giving the source of the data.	55%	45%

Table 15 (Questionnaire 1)

V. Evaluation

Evaluation	*Agree*	*Disagree*
1. The process doesn't need to be evaluated because the final product will reflect the amount of effort put in during the year.	29%	71%
2. It is acceptable for the student to get help with English.	80%	20%
3. Some proof must be seen by the supervisor to show that the submitted thesis is primarily the student's own work	80%	20%

Table 16 (Questionnaire 2)

Getting Help

From whom can a student receive help with the English in his/her thesis?	*%*
From a native speaker	54%
From the student's advisor	92%
From another teacher	46%
Other	8%

Appendix B

First Questionnaire on TMU Graduation Thesis, Fall 1995

I. Background

1. Academic field

___ American Literature
___ British Literature
___ Linguistics
___ Philology
___ Other (please specify)

2. Years teaching

_____ Number of years teaching
_____ Number of years teaching at TMU

3. What is the purpose of the graduation thesis? (Yes, Somewhat, No)

a) To allow the student to explore a narrow topic in greater depth than possible in a normal course — Y S N

b) To allow the student to read and do in-depth analysis of that reading, or of data, with minimal help from a teacher — Y S N

c) To demonstrate the student's ability to read and analyze — Y S N

d) To demonstrate the ability to think and write in an orderly (academic) fashion — Y S N

e) To demonstrate a mastery of English — Y S N

f) To allow the student to create his or her own idea and then to prove the correctness of that idea with support from data collected through research — Y S N

g) Other (please specify) — Y S N

4. What is the meaning of "originality" in the graduation thesis? (Yes, Somewhat, No)

a) Clearly demonstrating in what respect(s) the thesis is different from and superior to other papers on the same topic — Y S N

b) Clearly demonstrates proof of a *new* idea or opinion about the topic by the use of support from data gathered by the student through research (library or empirical). — Y S N

c) Other (please specify) — Y S N

II. Weight of Importance of Some Aspects of the Graduation Thesis
(5 = Very important, 1 = Not Important)

1. The task formulated by the student / the research question (1)	5 4 3 2 1
2. Content / ideas	5 4 3 2 1
3. Rhetorical aspects / organization	5 4 3 2 1
4. Use of language (spelling, syntax, vocabulary)	5 4 3 2 1
5. Research (quality / depth of and evidence of)	5 4 3 2 1
6. Process of doing research and writing	5 4 3 2 1
7. Difference from and superiority to other works on the same topic	5 4 3 2 1
8. Development (the amount, kinds and quality of support [examples, details, reasons]	5 4 3 2 1
9. Support (how well the details, examples and reasons support or illustrate the points made in the paper)	5 4 3 2 1
10. Format (MLA)	5 4 3 2 1
11. Other (Please specify)	5 4 3 2 1

III. Some Details

1. Content / ideas

a) originality of the central idea as found in the *thesis statement* (2)	5 4 3 2 1
b) other (please specify)	5 4 3 2 1

2. Rhetorical aspects / organization

a) the paper clearly has an introduction with background and the thesis statement, a body which supports the thesis statement, and a conclusion	5 4 3 2 1
b) clarity of meaning	5 4 3 2 1
c) *coherence* (3)	5 4 3 2 1
d) *unity* (4)	5 4 3 2 1
e) other (please specify)	5 4 3 2 1

3. Use of language

a) spelling	5 4 3 2 1
b) grammar / syntax (appropriateness)	5 4 3 2 1
c) grammar / syntax (correctness)	5 4 3 2 1
d) syntactic variety	5 4 3 2 1
e) general mastery of English	5 4 3 2 1
f) appropriate word choice	5 4 3 2 1
g) other (please specify)	5 4 3 2 1

4. Research

a) length & quality of bibliography	5 4 3 2 1
b) references in the paper / footnotes	5 4 3 2 1
c) depth of analysis or comparison of data	5 4 3 2 1
d) other (please specify)	5 4 3 2 1

IV Process

1. If you ask your students to follow a specific process for doing research and writing the graduation thesis, could you briefly outline the steps below?

2. What section of the thesis do you usually have the students write first?

V. Evaluation

Do you Agree or Disagree with these statements?

a) A D The process doesn't need to be evaluated because the final product will reflect the amount of effort put in during the year

b) A D It is acceptable for the student to get help with the English

c) A D Some proof must be seen by the supervisor to show that the submitted thesis is primarily the student's own work (such as preliminary drafts, the data collected, a working bibliography, etc.)

VI. Comments

Do you have any comments about this questionnaire or the graduation thesis? Was an issue you consider germane to the thesis (product or process) overlooked here? Do you have any recommendations for getting relevant information in other / additional ways?

Notes to the Questionnaire

1. A *research question* is the question the student proposes to answer through his/her research. The results of the research become the paper. Without a research question, the student is simply doing research for no specific purpose. However, broad reading about the topic also important for him/her to acquire sufficient background in that topic to be able to formulate a research question.

2. A *thesis statement* is the central idea for the paper. It is one sentence which contains the topic and an opinion, attitude or idea about the topic (Smalley & Ruetten 166).

3. *Coherence* refers to the repetition of key nouns, consistent use of pronouns, the use of transition signals to show relationships between ideas, and logical order (compare/contrast, cause/effect, chronological, etc.) (Oshima & Hogue 50).

4. A paper has *unity* when everything supports the thesis statement and nothing is superfluous (Oshima & Hogue 37).

Appendix C

Second Questionnaire on Graduation Thesis, Fall 1996

I'm sorry to bother you again with another questionnaire on the graduation thesis, but the results from the first one raised several important questions that need to be addressed before I can complete the paper for the journal and make decisions about the syllabus of the Expression class. Since the deadline for the journal is the end of October, I would really appreciate it if you could put the completed questionnaire in my mail box ***by October 15*** *so I can include the results in the paper. Even if you did not complete the first questionnaire, your answers will be very much appreciated.*

Thank you very much in advance.

I. Area of specialization.
Please circle your area of specialization.

American Literature	Linguistics
British Literature	Philology

II. The meaning of originality in a graduation thesis.
Circle T (True) or F (False). You may circle more than one.

T F 1. Originality in a graduation thesis means something different from and superior to all other published papers on the tame topic, i.e. a totally new idea that has never been published or discussed in academic circles.

T F 2. Originality in a graduation thesis means something different from and superior to other graduation theses at TMU on the same topic.

T F 3. Originality in a graduation thesis means the student's ideas as opposed to borrowing from critics or linguistic or Philology literature, or from a teacher of a course, i.e. the ideas may not be totally new in the field.

T F 4. Other (Please write in)

Other comments on the meaning of originality in a graduation thesis?

III. The importance of originality in a graduation thesis.

1. For a hypothetical average to good student (in your estimation), to what degree is originality important in a thesis for you as the evaluator of that thesis?
Mark on the continuum.

extremely _____ not so much

Circle T (True) or F (False). You may circle more than one.

T F 2. For you, the degree of importance of originality in a thesis depends on that particular students' ability to think creatively.

T F 3. For some students, the degree of the importance of originality in their theses is not really an issue for me. For those students, just producing something is an effort.

T F 4. For some students, the degree of the importance of originality in their theses is very much an issue for me. For those students, a little effort can produce a good thesis with the students' own ideas.

Other comments on the importance of originality in a graduation thesis?

IV. The meaning of research in a graduation thesis.
Circle T (True) or F (False).

T F 1. Research for a graduation thesis is finding support for the student's own ideas in anything published or not published (e.g. lecture notes), but **NOT** including examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper.

T F 2. Research for a graduation thesis is finding support for the student's own ideas by finding examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper, but **NOT** in anything else published or not published.

T F 3. Research for a graduation thesis is finding support for the student's own ideas by finding examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper **AND** from anything else published or not published.

T F 4. Other (please write in)

5. *Given a hypothetical average to good student (in your estimation), rank the items below from (1)what you would most like to see the student produce to (5)what you would least like to see the student produce, but would accept. Don't rank any items that you would not accept from that student.*

____ The student's own ideas not backed up with any support from any other sources.

____ The student's own ideas backed up with support from anything published or not published but **NOT** including examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper.

____ The student's own ideas backed up with support from examples from a novel, short story or poem which is the topic of the student's paper, but **NOT** in anything else published or not published.

____ The student's own ideas backed up with both types of support.

____ Someone else's ideas (not the student's, could be the teacher's or published materials) expanded further with examples from any type of other sources.

Circle T (True) or F (False).

T F 6. It is more important to me that the student have his/her own ideas than supporting those ideas with any type of research.

T F 7. It is more important to me that the student support any ideas he/she puts forth with any type of research than that those ideas are the student's own ideas.

Other comments on the meaning of research in the graduation thesis?

V. The central idea in the thesis statement

Circle T (True) or F (False).

T F 1. The central idea in the thesis statement must be original (as you have defined it above).

T F 2. The central idea in the thesis statement must be the student's own idea even if it is not original (as you have defined it above).

Other comments on the central idea in the thesis statement?

VI. Plagiarism

1. *Check the item(s) you consider to be plagiarism.*

Without any citation, if the student uses in his or her graduation thesis

____ your idea(s) as you have expressed them in a class or in a private meeting with the student.

____ any published material at all.

____ any unpublished manuscripts, recordings, letters, conversations, etc.

____ other (please write in)

Circle T (True) or F (False).

T F 2. Analyzing data is more important than giving the source of the data.

3. What do you do when you find a student of yours has plagiarized, or you suspect has plagiarized, in his/her graduation thesis? *(Write your answer)*

Other comments on plagiarism?

VII. The importance of skills related to academic writing.

Please rank in importance from 1 to 3 the following skills related to academic writing that you feel your students should be using in their graduation theses.
(1=very important, 2=relatively important, 3=not so important, 4=not at all important)

____ summarizing & paraphrasing ideas from other sources

____ synthesizing information from multiple sources

____ documenting sources (making citations in the paper & preparing a works cited list)

____ other (write in)

Other comments on skills related to academic writing and their importance in a graduation thesis?

VIII. The importance of syntactic correctness.

1. Why is syntactic correctness important in a graduation thesis?
Check the item(s) you consider to be important.

____ to make meaning clear to the reader,

____ to demonstrate that the student has mastered the syntax which he or she has been learning for many years,

____ faulty syntax may indicate faulty logic or fuzzy thinking,

____ all of the above,

____ none of the above (*if none of the above, please write your reason below*).

Other comments on the importance of syntactic correctness?

IX. Getting help with the English in a graduation thesis.

1. From whom can a student receive help with the English in his or her thesis?
Check the one(s) you consider possible.

____ from a native speaker

____ from the student's advisor

____ from another teacher

____ other (*please write in*)

2. To what extent can the student receive help?
Mark on the continuum.

totally rewriting — proofreading — no help

Other comments on getting help with the English?

X. Evaluation criteria
Please briefly write your answers.

1. What process do you use to evaluate a graduation thesis?

2. List the three most important criteria by which you evaluate a graduation thesis.

Other comments on evaluation of a graduation thesis?

Appendix D

Student Evaluation of the Expression Class(33)

I need your help in creating an English Expression class that meets the needs of English majors who will write a graduation thesis in English. Would you mind taking a few minutes to help me by filling in this questionnaire ?

1. In writing your thesis, what was the biggest problem you experienced?

2. How do you think the Expression class could have helped you with that problem?

3. What were some other problems you had in preparing and writing your thesis?

3. What was helpful in preparing you to write your thesis? *Rank each of the following from 1 through 5 (5 is very helpful, 1 is not at all helpful).*

___ the research paper
___ practicing MLA
___ studying the rhetorical aspects of writing in English (about the introduction, body, conclusion, etc.)
___ the Spelling Dictionary
___ evaluating papers & rewriting
___ my corrections & comments on your papers
___ brainstorming for ideas
___ anything else? *(write it/them)*

4. What did you have to learn from your advisor that you did not learn in the Expression class? *(Don't try to remember everything, just list one or two major things.)*

5. *Check the one that applies to you*

___ The Expression class was quite helpful in preparing me for writing a graduation thesis.
___ A few things were helpful, but not many.
___ I didn't learn very much in the class that was helpful for me.
___ The class was a waste of time.

6. Yes / No Did you complete the Expression class?

7. If not, why not?

___ I didn't sound interesting.
___ I already knew the contents of the course.
___ I didn't have time; there were other things that were more important.
___ I tried the class, but didn't find it useful or didn't like it.
___ I thought I could write a good thesis without taking the class.
___ (another reason - write it)

6. Any other comments?

Thank you very much for your help and congratulations on completing your graduation thesis.

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